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ARTICLES:

(1) DPJ to aim at Lower House dissolution with Diet debate

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)
July 28, 2008

Democratic Party of Japan President Ichiro Ozawa announced on July 27 that his party would not boycott deliberations in the next extraordinary Diet session. The policy course apparently resulted from a decision that in order to force the prime minister into a Lower House dissolution for a snap general election, it would be quicker to pursue the government in Diet debate than being fixated on the political significance of a censure motion against the prime minister that was adopted by the Upper House in the previous Diet session.

In the DPJ, there had been a variety of views on how to handle Diet business after the censure motion was adopted by the Upper House.

Those in favor of a continued boycott feared that responding to a call for Diet deliberations in the next session would end up diluting the political significance of the Upper House's first-ever adoption of a censure motion against the prime minister, the trump card for forcing the prime minister into cabinet resignation en masse and Lower House dissolution.

At work behind Ozawa's decision to return to Diet deliberations is young and mid-level members' strong resistance to boycotting Diet debate.

The prevailing view in the DPJ is that there is no shortage of

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issues to grill the government and ruling bloc, such as the question of unidentified pension records, the medical insurance system for people 75 and older, measures against soaring oil prices, and a review of the labor dispatch system. "There is no need for our party to boycott Diet debate and come under fire," a mid-level member said.

A junior member also thinks that with the party leadership race coming up in September, Ozawa made the decision so as not to irritate mid-level and young members critical of boycotting Diet debate, thereby avoiding splitting the party.

(2) Interviews with METI minister and MAFF minister after WTO ministerial

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
Evening, July 26, 2008

Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Minister Toshiaki Amari and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Minister Masatoshi gave a press conference after the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting on July 25. Questions and answers are as follows:

-- What is your evaluation of the new chairman's plan?

Amari: Differences in views on some disputed points were left unresolved in the meeting of seven countries and one region, as well as in the ministerial meeting of 30 countries. But I said that we find it acceptable as the basis for negotiations in order to find common ground. The proposed tariff cut rates in the industrial sector are proper for industrialized and developing countries, but a provision on seeking exceptional measures is overly inclined toward developing countries. I am also dissatisfied with vague expressions used in the anti-concentration provision.

Wakabayashi: Although I repeatedly insisted that the ratio of "sensitive items" to the total be set at 8 PERCENT, this argument was not accepted. In the ministerial meeting, I said that although I was very dissatisfied, I would make efforts to secure 8 PERCENT. I accept the Lamy proposal as a draft proposal for future discussions.

-- What is the focus of attention in the negotiations?

Amari: No countries agreed on the final proposal. Each nation has presented its request. I believe WTO Director General Lamy will do his best to prevent a balance from breaking down and dropouts from emerging. Countries are dissatisfied with measures proposed in the chairman's report in the agricultural and industrial sectors, but the key point is to what extent each country will contain its assertions in an effort to reach an agreement. The negotiations have moved a step forward.

Wakabayashi: Countries made statements emphasizing that a failure in the negotiations would have a serious impact on the global economy and disappoint the world. It was good that an atmosphere for each nation to make further efforts was created in the meetings. In the agricultural sector, agreement has yet to be reached on all details. What to do about compensation has been left behind. I will think about how to negotiate on securing 8 PERCENT for "sensitive items."

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(3) Government to drop plan to send GSDF engineering personnel to Sudan for time being; Japan's contribution to Sudan PKO losing steam

SANKEI (Page 5) (Abridged slightly)
July 28, 2008

The government's survey team composed of personnel from the Defense Ministry, Self-Defense Forces, and other offices departed yesterday for Sudan from Hamada Airport to make preparations for dispatching SDF personnel to the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) in southern Sudan. The government plans to send two SDF personnel to UNMIS headquarters in September after the team returns home. In terms of international contribution, Japan's position is certain to decline following its decision to forgo a plan to send the SDF to Afghanistan due to the New Komeito's stiff resistance.

The survey team consists of 11 members from the Defense Ministry, SDF, Cabinet Office, and Foreign Ministry. In addition to Sudan where the government has decided to send personnel, the team is scheduled to tour PKO centers in Ghana, Kenya and Egypt where SDF personnel will be dispatched as instructors.

According to a government source, the team will also visit the southern Sudanese cities of Juba and Malakal and the central city of Obeid, besides the country's capital of Khartoum where UNMIS headquarters is located, in order to survey activities by forces of other countries. The government plans to consider candidate sites for sending personnel in the future.

An SDF dispatch to UNMIS headquarters was announced by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda in his meeting in late June with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Japan will participate in peacekeeping operations in Africa for the first time in 13 years since the UN Operations in Mozambique (UNUMOZ) in 1993-1995.

Tokyo has declined the Sudanese government's strong request for sending ground-based engineering personnel by citing the insufficient confirmation of their safety. There is simmering discontent in the United Nations as seen in Secretary General Ban's call for greater SDF contributions in the areas of airlift, ground transportation, and supplies.

The government also sent a fact-finding team to Afghanistan to explore the possibility of sending the SDF there, but it eventually dropped the plan due to the New Komeito's resistance. Given the situation, the government plans to consider seriously sending SDF troops to Sudan. The Defense Ministry and SDF are envisaging sending a 200-strong unit centering on Ground Self-Defense engineering personnel to conduct such activities as repairing roads and removing mines in central and southern Sudanese cities.

Sending SDF troops to Africa requires thorough preparations against the unstable security situation and communicable diseases. Selected personnel must also undergo training for about six months. This

means an SDF dispatch would be on the agenda next year or later.

Japan is currently participating in only two PKO programs: the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights in which Japan began participating in 1996, and the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) in which Japan joined in March 2007. On the Golan Heights,

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two command personnel and 43 GSDF personnel are engaged in transportation, and in Nepal, six unarmed GSDF personnel are monitoring the disarmament.

In terms of the number of personnel engaged in PKO, Japan ranks 83rd, the lowest among the Group of Eight industrialized countries. The government is growing alarmed at the decline in the SDF's international contributions, including the question of extending the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling operation in the Indian Ocean, on which the New Komeito remains cautious.

(4) Government to expand number of refugees to be accepted in Japan, starting in 2010

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
July 28, 2008

The government decided yesterday to shift its policy of accepting refugees. It will accept refugees living in camps in third countries after fleeing from political persecution and support their livelihoods in Japan. It has so far accepted foreigners who came to Japan as refugees but only after authorizing them. It aims to dodge international criticism for "being severe toward refugees."

Relevant ministries, including the Foreign Ministry, Justice Ministry and Cabinet Secretariat, will hold a study session soon. They will work out before the end of the year such specifics as the process of accepting refugees, the number of refugees to be accepted, and measures to support them in Japan. The government aims to accept about several dozen refugees starting in 2010 at the earliest.

The government plans to introduce a "third-country settlement system" as a new refugee policy. This system has already been introduced by the United States and Britain.

Under the system, Japan will accept refugees after Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) examiners confirm their desire to live in Japan. Based on a list of refugees provided by the UNHCR, Japan will authorize refugees and decide to accept them. The number of refugees Japan authorized and accepted in 2007 was 41.

(5) Transfer of jurisdiction over 29 laws to consumer agency fixed: Prime minister's policy of attaching importance to consumers now on implementation stage

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
July 24, 2008

Measures designed to boost consumer administration, which Prime Minister Fukuda has promoted, will now move onto an implementation stage. Following a report compiled by the Consumer Administration Promotion Council, chaired by Tsuyoshi Sasaki, a professor at Gakushuin University, the government has decided to shift jurisdiction over 29 laws to the consumer agency to be established in fiscal 2009. The next stage is to move the work to draft a comprehensive bill to establish it and to submit the legislation to the next extraordinary Diet session. The Fukuda administration's policy target is to strengthen consumer affairs administration and thus impress the public. Meeting this challenge will help solidify its political base.

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The consumer agency initiative will become the showcase for measures

to strengthen consumer administration. The government at a meeting of the Promotion Council on July 23 reported its plan to submit a "bill to prevent consumer damage" (tentative name). The legislation is intended to protect consumers from illegal business practices. It and the bill creating a consumer agency will be presented to the next extraordinary Diet session.

Bureau directors of concerned government agencies at a meeting that day approved a draft action program, which cited measures to strengthen consumer administration, apart from the plan to establish a consumer agency. As a follow-up to a number of false food labeling incidents, the report proposed promoting efforts to introduce the traceability of food products. As part of such efforts, the report called for introducing before the end of this fiscal year a method for business operators to address the issue in a specific manner, such as by determining the actual state of the documentation of receipt and shipment records of goods.

Attorney Kazuhiro Yoshioka, chairman of the Committee on Measures on Consumer Issues under the Japan Federation of Bar Association (JFBA), told a press conference, "I give high scores to the government for creating a good system."

Producers until now have been the main supporters of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The envisaged measures to strengthen consumer administration are aimed at tapping new political supporters, such as consumers and average working people.

Though the JFBA has evaluated the proposed measures to a certain extent, there still remain some challenges. Mariko Sano, executive director of the Japan Housewives Association at the Promotion Council meeting the same day presented a letter of opinions making an issue over the government failure to transfer to the consumer agency jurisdiction over the Food Safety Commission, which is responsible for evaluating food risk.

The focus of the next extraordinary Diet session is expected to be on a bill to extend the Law on Refueling Operations in the Indian Ocean and those related to the reallocation of special-purpose road construction revenues for other uses. This could cause the consumer agency establishment bill to be put on the backburner. Many companies are concerned about tougher regulations that would give priority to consumers. Some LDP lawmakers are complaining that a consumer agency would not bring more votes.

Kaoru Yosano during a taping of BS11 program on the 23rd pointed out, "The Eisaku Sato cabinet was marked by such policy themes as the reversion of Okinawa. However, Mr. Fukuda has no skills in sending policy messages."

The prime minister underscored at the Promotion Council meeting, "The consumer agency is an organization for the sake of the public. I must obtain the understanding of the people."

(6) Development of carbon dioxide capture and storage technology by 2020, according to government's action program: Assistance also provided for introduction of electric cars

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
July 26, 2008

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A full version of the government's action program of measures to prevent global warming that will be adopted possibly early next week was revealed on July 25. The program is the embodiment of measures envisaged in the Fukuda Vision, which Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda revealed in June. The package includes the dissemination of the solar photovoltaic system by cutting the installation cost by 50 PERCENT from the current level and practical use of carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS) technology by 2020.

The Fukuda Vision puts up a long-term goal of cutting emissions of greenhouse gases, such as CO₂, by 60 PERCENT -80 PERCENT by 2050, and lays out the need to disseminate energy-saving technologies and to promote technological innovation.

The Vision sets a goal of increasing the amount of solar power generation 10 times the present level by 2020 and 40 times by 2030. To achieve that end, the action program aims at halving the price of the solar photovoltaic system in three to five years' time and offering assistance for the introduction of the system to households and the technological development of solar cells. Regarding the CCS system, the Vision aims at launching a full-scale demonstration project in fiscal 2009 and putting it to practical use by 2020. The current cost of handling 1 ton of CO2 is estimated to exceed 5,000 yen. The action program includes a goal of lowering such a cost to the 1,000 yen level by the 2020s.

The program also incorporates assistance for the introduction of electric cars and fuel battery-assisted cars and a reduction in the prices of next-generation batteries and fuel batteries, which are used as motive energy, to one-fortieth of the present level by 2030.

(7) Profile: Lester Tenney, chairman of POW group that will be dissolved next May

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
July 19, 2008

"In the past, I bowed my head in fear of the Japanese. Today, I bow my head in honor of you," Lester Tenney, 88, said and bowed his head at the beginning of a lecture meeting held recently in Tokyo.

Tenney survived the Bataan Death March. He surrendered to the Japanese military in April 1942 in the Philippines, where he was stationed as an U.S. military tank driver. About 7,000 to 10,000 POWs died from beatings, disease, and hunger. He said in a tearful voice: "I was just watching my colleagues dying."

As an American POW, he was taken to the Mitsui Miike Coal Mine in Fukuoka Prefecture. He dug coal while being beaten with shovels. He was freed and returned to the United States when the war was over. He has been unable to raise his left arm because of the after-effects. Many of the POWs still suffer from stress disorders.

He hosted a 20-year old Japanese male student 41 years ago. When he told about how he had been treated by the Japanese military, the Japanese student shared his anger. He then visited Japan in 1988 to attend the Japanese man's wedding and accompanied him on his two-week honeymoon. He then felt the warmth of Japanese people. He was able to forgive the Japanese, thinking that he should lay aside his hatred to open his mind.

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He has written many letters addressed to Japanese prime ministers calling them to offer an apology. He has also continued asking Japanese industries that used the POWs to establish a foundation. He said: "I want them to invite our grandchildren to Japan with money offered by a foundation and show them the worksites. I also want our grandchildren to feel the warmth of Japanese people." But it will be difficult to realize this. The National Commander of the American Defense of Bataan and Corregidor, which Tenney chairs, will be dissolved next May due to the aging of its membership. He expressed sorrow, saying: "Old soldiers simply fade away."

Lester Tenney is a professor emeritus at Arizona State University. He wrote an autobiography titled "My Hitch in Hell." He lives with his wife.

(8) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:
MLIT owns 65 PERCENT -- 4,100 units -- of all vehicles possessed by central government

Mainichi:
63 years after fierce battle in Philippines: Interview with Filipina about her WWII experience

Yomiuri:

20 prefectures abolish school district system, according to Yomiuri survey: Public schools competing with private schools for students

Nikkei:

Firms adjust pricing systems to pass on costs

Sankei:

Cabinet shuffle in limbo: New Komeito applying pressure on Fukuda administration; Coalition at crossroads

Tokyo Shimbun:

Japan considering introduction of international solidarity levies to be imposed on airline tickets: Financing development assistance eyed

Akahata:

Waves of price rises start again next week

(9) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

(1) Council for Science and Technology Policy needs to show resolution on iPS research

(2) Energy conservation everyone's business

Mainichi:

(1) Pension reform: Single program requires political decision

Yomiuri:

(1) Minister should act on Oita school scandal

(2) Osaka budget should be precedent for local fiscal reconstruction

Nikkei:

(1) Beijing Olympics: China must improve quality of its economy

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Sankei:

(1) MITI report must result in protection of national secrets

(2) Japanese-language education must be revamped

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) Treatment of caregivers must be improved

(2) Ending Darfur massacre requires greater international pressure

Akahata:

(1) Extension of new antiterrorism law main objective of next extraordinary Diet session

SCHIEFFER